

Portland, Ore – Today Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore) joined local citizens and community leaders to announce his proposal for immediately reducing the impact of rising gas prices. Portland and the metro region have led the way in providing innovative and cost effective methods for helping people deal with the rising costs of gas. Rep Blumenauer's bill takes these ideas even further by having the federal government invest in communities, transportation choices, and affordable location-efficient housing.

"Gas prices have shot up by more than a dollar a gallon in the last few months," said Congressman Blumenauer. "As much as we all want a simple solution to the complex energy puzzle, there is no silver bullet. One thing we can do now is give people more choices. Portland is recognized internationally because of the transportation choices we offer our citizens. This has led to huge savings for families, and I want to improve on this model and extend it to other areas of the country. My proposal includes everything from offering a tax credit for carpooling to helping transit agencies cope with rising fuel prices and demand by funding fare subsidies, service improvements, fuel purchases, and technology assistance. These are short term actions that will immediately provide relief from rising energy costs."

"We're proud of our track record at Intel in offering numerous initiatives to spur alternative transportation, including transit subsidies, bicycle programs and employee shuttle service to light-rail stations," said Jonathan Williams, Intel's Oregon Government Affairs Manager. "We appreciate Congressman Blumenauer's work to encourage more employers to lead the way in developing and supporting alternative commute programs for their employees."

"Congressman Blumenauer's bill is a powerful toolbox packed with low-cost, high-impact ways to help Oregonians avoid rising gas prices and fight global warming," said Bob Stacey, Executive Director of 1000 Friends of Oregon. "As energy costs rise, we're all looking for more choices in where we live and how we get around. This bill gives Americans a break and helps build affordable, walkable, family friendly communities at the same time."

THE BLUMENAUER LEGISLATION WILL:

Increase Commuter Choices

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Equalize the transportation fringe benefit between those who commute by public transportation and those who commute by driving.

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Allow employees to cash-in their parking benefits to use on other commute choices.

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Extend the same transportation fringe benefits to bike commuters as provided for those who commute by car or public transportation.

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Extend transportation fringe benefits to individuals who are self-employed.

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Create a tax credit for vanpool expenses and services for those who share their commutes.

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Create a tax credit for qualified employers and employees who telecommute.

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Provide commuters information on transportation choices through educational programs such as Metro's "Drive Less, Save More" program; grants to support carpooling and vanpooling programs; informational websites and other materials.

Help Transit Agencies

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Help transit agencies cope with rising fuel prices and increasing demand by providing federal funds for fare subsidies, service improvements, fuel purchases, and technology assistance.

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Require the FTA to consider a Streetcar project's contributions to land use, density, economic development, and carbon emission reductions in considering it for federal funding.

Assist Communities

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Expand the successful Safe Routes to Schools program to include high schools; double the authorized funding for this successful national program.

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Provide federal grants to improve communities' transportation choices, such as travel demand management strategies, carpool or telecommuting projects, upgrades to streets to facilitate bicycle and pedestrian use, intelligent transportation improvements to reduce congestion, and car-sharing and bike sharing programs.

Provide Housing Assistance

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Increase information about and availability of Location-Efficient Mortgages (LEM) for homes located near public transportation. LEMs increase the borrowing power of home buyers who choose not to drive, since they don't have to spend household income owning and operating

an automobile.

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Provide funds to help states acquire, construct, and preserve affordable housing close to public transit.

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Require the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to develop a standard that measures the transportation costs associated with a home's location, enabling Real Estate agents to provide this information to prospective buyers.

Require the Federal Government to Lead by Example

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Provide transportation fringe benefits to all federal employees.

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Encourage Federal agencies to participate in local transportation management associations that promote more efficient use of transportation and parking resources.